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Rupert Brooke:
"An organized chance of living again"

by

Tracy Charity Schoenle

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English (Literature)
Major Professor: C. L. P. Silet

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Ames, Iowa

1997

Graduate College
Iowa State University

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Tracy Charity Schoenle

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

A damned, successful poet

"This is how it will be" you tell us
in your silly verse, letters terse,
hysterics flaming your skin's pinkness
to rages of blooming roses--a sickness.

In ruffled shirt you pose and preen,
scorn us well who only say,
"It's lovely. Why not a bit more green
to match the sheen, the glimmers in your eye?"
(that in childhood suffered so many sties)
We know you too well, Our Favorite Actress,
dying at imagined horrors of wits sweeter, debaters meatier...

How shocking, "modern," your silk verse,
though line lengths no enigma. Bring the hearse
to pull him whose words
were rages in moonlight, purple hours, dying Sun.
Dump his lineaments (and cast-off sonnets)
on an isle of Eros
(for man, woman he'd use then weep for--
with a syphilitic soul).

Hail, Skyros!, that shall be the place where he can spell
Success--
if we write it for him, push the bony, creaky hand.
Come with the ginger, the too sweet preservative.
Say in tune, with eyes pale from war
and so from the ink well pour
"There was a damned Successful Poet..."

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I. THE SCHEME

"This is an offer. A damn serious offer." (Letters 195).

Rupert Brooke wrote to his friend Jacques Raverat in 1909 of "The great essential thing...the Organized Chance of Living Again: The SCHEME" a proposal that he and some chosen friends would meet on May 1, 1933, at Basle Station, Switzerland to escape the boredom of middle age by performing a disappearing act of sorts. Dead to the world left behind, they would instead embrace a new life:

...We'll show the grey unbelieving age...that there's a better Heaven than the pale serene Anglican windless harmonium-buzzing Eternity of the Christians, a Heaven in Time, now and for ever, ending for each, staying for all, a Heaven of Laughter and Bodies and Flowers and Love and People and Sun and Wind, in the only place we know or care for, ON EARTH. (Letters 195)

This sentiment was highly colored by the loosely structured ideology of what Virginia Woolf dubbed "Neo-Paganism," a pastoral mode of thinking and living that found Brooke and his Cambridge friends constructing summer camps consisting of bathing, reading, and glorifying youth. They rebelled gently against Victorian ideals through a freer mingling of the sexes that held friendship to be a higher good than marriage (Delany xiii-xviii). The concerns contained in this letter are also, after a series of transformations, representative of some of Brooke's best, and often underexamined, poetry. Others assert

that these lines represent nothing so much as Brooke's refusal to leave youth and irresponsibility behind him.

Paul Delany wrote of Brooke's life, "The real story is far from golden, but more worth the telling" (212). In many ways, the poetry shares the same burdens as the man-into-myth. Literary criticism has been inaccurate in considering the focus of much of Brooke's work, coloring it as outmoded with the coming of Modernism and naive, if not jingoistic, when the battles following his death proved war to be a new and terrible machine.

What the Critics Said...

William Laskowski writes "[p]robably no other literary figure has inspired so much bad writing as Brooke," an interpretation that stems from critical writings defining Brooke and the scope of his poetry too narrowly (147). Brooke has often been defined as a traditional poet who was backward-looking and had no affinity with Modernism, a view which has constructed him as an anachronism for much of this century. Even more pervasive and damaging is his categorization as a "war poet," the dominant view of Brooke. On the basis of five sonnets ("1914") seeming to celebrate England and her war efforts, Brooke was shot to posthumous fame as a symbol of England's greatest sacrifice. For many readers, especially those recalling him only as a war poet, the name Rupert Brooke

still calls to mind the epigram penned by Frances Cornford and dedicated to Brooke:

A young Apollo, golden-haired
 Stands dreaming on the verge of strife
 Magnificently unprepared
 For the long littleness of life.

(see Hastings 8)

It proved to be a prophetic statement and even today holds some popular appeal, despite the reality that the myth is crumbling to reveal a far more interesting poet than "a young Apollo."

More recently, biographers have revealed a darker side of the poet which helps undermine the long-standing myths about Brooke. These interpretations should be moving critical commentary closer to a realistic interpretation of the poetry--that is, one backed by a more fully fleshed out biographical understanding of Brooke than the early memoirs of his friends and well-wishers ever permitted. John Lehmann opens his biography with a chapter addressing Brooke's nervous breakdown at Lulworth in 1912. Paul Delany examines Brooke's apparent confusion about the question of his sexual orientation and the ways in which his frequent emotional upheavals eroded his friendships, relationships, and identity. This emerging view of Brooke--Delany's and Lehmann's Brooke--is a fine beginning found largely in the biographies. It has yet to be realized appreciably in scholarship treating his poetry and small body of prose.

Brooke's poetry is entitled to a chance of living again--not an appraisal dependent on World War I and the icon chiseled in marble to be lauded or defiled as generations have seen fit--but a reappraisal that exposes the rough edges, the emotional entanglements of Brooke's life that play such an active role in a body of poetry that is largely autobiographical in nature. Increasingly, the critical observations of Paul Delany, John Lehmann, and William Laskowski collectively mark a growing awareness that the figure of Brooke immortalized in Cornford's epigram is a drastic misreading of the poet and his work. Critics, Laskowski concludes, have been able to figure Brooke only in one of three "false avatars" that correspond roughly to the three critical schools outlined below: "the golden-haired Apollo...the overgrown public school boy patriot...[and] the psychologically tormented paranoiac of Lulworth" (138).

Brooke as an Apollonian figure could be taken to represent the poet of seemingly traditional verse. Brooke was a Cambridge scholar trained in classics whose composition form of choice was the sonnet. His chief themes were love and relationships, often idealized and sometimes represented through abstractions. Samuel Hynes wrote in 1972,

...his poetry sounds the way poetry should sound, because it sounds like so many poems that have already been written. Echoes of Marvell and Donne, of Shakespeare, Blake...haunt the Collected Poems; the only ghost that is not there is Brooke's. (Edwardian Occasions 145)

Not only did critics see Brooke's work as reworking tired material, but they heard it taking on too much of others' voices or "poses" as well. Critics viewing Brooke as Apollo often level their greatest criticism at Brooke as the poetic voice of a clever, somewhat amateurish poseur. Even astute appraisals are tempted to parrot; "...for Brooke the poses he adopted were an attempt to compensate for a reality he could not accept" (Moeyes 467). The poses are discussed as an explication of a developing poet who never came into his own.

Paul Moeyes discusses Brooke's leadership in the Georgian poetry movement and the many dichotomies in his character, chiefly addressing neo-Paganism and latent Christianity as key facets in his personality and poetry. He is "surprised...that Brooke's reputation as a rebel-innovator has never been seriously questioned, the more so since no commentator has been able to explain how an arch-rebel came to write a cycle of fervently patriotic War Sonnets" (456). Despite Moeyes's inquiry into Brooke, he too concludes that Brooke was a poseur and an amateur who used his poetry "...not as a means to analyse and investigate the truth, but to escape from and compensate for a reality he could not cope with" (467).

While the speaker is doing a bit of preening in his sonnets, the "poses" are not so much poses as a self-conscious and studied utilization of the speaker for providing a commentary on art and society. In addition, these "poses" are a dialogue

with the self. The poetry and life of Brooke reveal him to have been negotiating the desire to be modern yet conventional, and vacillating both on sexual orientation and the treatment of the object of his love, questions which fostered an uncertainty in himself that helped him groom his sophisticated, often ironic, voice. Recently, this voice is coming to be appreciated as more authentic. Frank Field, writing in 1991, soundly contradicts earlier criticism by describing Brooke's poetry as:

...marked by a freedom and a lack of reverence that made a significant contribution to the task of aerating the atmosphere of the English literary world in the years before 1914....Brooke was that very English phenomenon, the professional disguised as an amateur, the attention that he paid to the example of Donne was far from wasted.... (114)

Especially apt to treat Brooke acidly are those who mistakenly view him as a war poet based on the five war sonnets, "1914." While these are the poems that pushed sales of the Collected Works to 300,000 by 1926, the volume contains over one hundred poems focusing on diverse themes (Hassall 528). To focus on five sonnets--often without considering published fragments on war that demonstrate Brooke's movement in new directions--does a disservice to the poetry and the poet's reputation. Nevertheless, much of the scholarship on Brooke casts him in this mold.

Brooke was the symbol of a generation, class, and nation in 1915. He was no soldier. In a letter dated 9 April 1915 (two weeks before his death) Brooke firmly believed himself to be

"more tourist still than soldier" (Letters 679). Most present day readers persist in believing that Brooke was a war poet, a hero dying for the glory of England, when what England needed in the early days of 1915 was both propaganda for the war and a means of reconciling their losses, especially the losses among the privileged classes.

In Brooke, England mourned not only one who stood for the nineteenth century ideal of war as a noble, gentlemanly endeavor, but a passing way of life. As many have observed before, the long Edwardian summer was over, and Brooke--the epitome of the best who had flourished in that age--was to signal the end of an era with his death. England lost a Rugby athlete, a classically-educated Cambridge scholar, and a poet when Brooke succumbed to septicemia in the Aegean on April 23, 1915, having never seen an hour of battle. His burial in an olive grove on the island of Skyros was the final classical touch that did not fail to propel him to the status of a popular hero. He was compared many times with Lord Byron fighting the Turks for Greek freedom; An inscription in Greek saying as much was placed on the burial site. He was written of as a favorite of the Olympian deities, destined, like Keats, to die young, a comparison that has been noted ad infinitum. In consequence, much of the writing on Brooke is a hagiography while much more of the criticism seeks a violent purging of the myth by burning the "saint" at the stake.

Critics like Samuel Hynes lead the inquisition on this "war poet."

In Edwardian Occasions, Hynes devotes the shortest chapter in his book to Brooke, opening with the views that most critics are bound to: "Rupert Brooke belongs, not to a generation, and certainly not to posterity, but to a date: in so far as his name survives, it does so in inevitable connection with 1914" (144). While the five war sonnets of 1914 awarded Brooke a large, popular reading audience, his fame rests here by chance, and critics like Hynes abuse him for it, rightly claiming him not a war poet but an "On-the-way-to-war Poet."

Hynes's views find ready corroboration in many discussions of war poetry, if only to deny vehemently that Brooke was not a "true" war poet in the sense that those following after him--Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and others--were. He spoke of England's involvement in the war in abstract ideals instead of getting into the trenches with the mud, blood, and realism as later poets did. George Parfitt, Paul Moeyes, and countless others call Brooke's war sonnets a "cleansing" and "the desirability of early death...[they] are hardly concerned with the war" (Moeyes 466).

If Brooke was not a soldier, in life and in poetry, what kind of a poet was he? Increasingly, critics are skipping this question in favor of asking what kind of person Brooke was.

Recently, most notably Paul Delany's The Neo-Pagans: Rupert Brooke and the Ordeal of Youth, biographers have revealed Brooke as a personality built on contradictions. His psychological and emotional characteristics are scrutinized in his relationships and his life's crises such as the "Lulworth incident" which precipitated his nervous breakdown of 1912.

One of the few critics to apply recent psychological profiles of Brooke successfully--that is, without characterizing him as what Laskowski dubs "the psychologically tormented paranoiac of Lulworth"--to the poetry is Adrian Caesar. While Caesar still considers Brooke a war poet--his chapter on Brooke is the first in his book entitled Taking it like a man: Suffering, sexuality and the War Poets. Brooke, Sassoon, Owen, Graves (1993)--he takes up the issue of Brooke's "posing" under the rubric of "the psycho-sexual dilemmas with which he was struggling at the time" (18). Caesar considers Brooke's poses to be mannered, but less insincere than earlier critics believed them to be. He concludes, "It surely was Brooke's inability to come to terms with his sexuality that lies at the heart of his neurosis" (55). This inability to accept his identity spelled Brooke's failure as a poet for Caesar. He takes up the view of Brooke's war sonnets as revealing a death wish and an escape from his own identity, viewing them as essentially stifling the poetic growth Brooke had made up to that time.

Early Reviews and a History of Brooke's Publications

War coupled with critical appraisals of Brooke as a conventional poet may have altered our view of Brooke for much of the century, but early reviewers often objected to the "ugliness" of some of his poems. During his lifetime, Brooke was a minor poet who often received violently contradictory reviews of his work. Brooke himself wrote of the reaction to Poems 1911, his first volume of verse:

...it's really rather a shock to me--& made me momentarily hopeless--that so many intelligent & well-tasted people didn't seem to have any idea what I was driving at--in any poem of the last few years. (Letters 327-328)

Some reviewers were coming to appreciate his attempts at "realistic" impressions, but even then, many expected him to sound like a traditional poet.

Poems 1911 was the only volume Brooke published in his lifetime. By the time it came to publication, much of it was already lost to him: "People are queer about my poems...Some like the early ones...These rather sadden me. I hobnob vaguely with them over the promising verses of a young poet, called Rupert Brooke, who died in 1908" (Letters 327). He succeeded in shocking one reviewer with his "modern" poetry when a mildly approving voice wrote on 29 August 1912 of Brooke's "A Channel Passage," "His disgusting sonnet on love and seasickness ought never to have been printed; but we are tempted to like him for writing it" (Times Literary

Supplement). The reviewer commended his "power over words and sounds" and "a rich nature...fighting eagerly towards the truth." Later this skill of manipulating sounds and words helped his most popular poems find a home in anthologies, "...upon merits which have nothing to do with lucidity. It is in fact a triumph of sound over sense" that some critics found nothing more than "high-sounding romantic claptrap" (Lennam 403).

Brooke also published poems in New Numbers, a short-lived journal founded by Lascelles Abercrombie. In the 19 March 1914 edition of the Times Literary Supplement, a reviewer covering New Numbers spoke of four of Brooke's poems from the South Seas as exhibiting a "complex consciousness." The reviewer decided that the poet was "in love with love" and "groping his way towards an actual new sense...."

Abercrombie and Brooke both contributed to Edward Marsh's new volume, Georgian Poetry, 1911-1912. (Five such volumes were to appear between 1911 and 1922.) The Georgian poets used the mechanics of nineteenth century poetry such as the sonnet while attempting to write "modern" subject matter. They resented the rhetoric and rabid patriotism of the Victorian poets and favored instead humble subjects, often the minutiae of daily life (Moeyes 457). In his Georgian Poetic, Myron Simon discusses the Georgians' affinity for "a brand of realism" that eschewed abstraction and generalization (48).

Likewise, their preference for pastoral settings was "...a function of their brand of realism....In natural surroundings they felt themselves less distracted by contemporary and historical fashions..." (Simon 55).

For their poetry, the Georgians envisioned and addressed a large, general reading audience. Brooke attests to this belief in a letter to his publisher, Frank Sidgwick; "Eddie Marsh...is planning a book called 'Georgian Poets'--containing the work of some ten moderns. It is designed to persuade people at large that a lot of good stuff is being written" (17). Brooke intended Georgian Poetry to be something of a "revolutionary dawn" alerting the public that good, "modern" poetry did exist. The volume did not so much awaken poetic sensibilities in the public as attain "best seller" status. Timothy Rogers attests, in his edited collection of early reviews by and about Georgian poets, Georgian Poetry 1911-1922: "At least in its beginnings, 'Georgian Poetry' was a successful business venture rather than a literary movement....Marsh estimated that in the final reckoning 'Georgian Poetry, 1911-1912' sold 15,000 copies" (16-17).

Among those published in Marsh's Georgian Poetry were D.H. Lawrence, Siegfried Sassoon, and Robert Graves, names generally struck from the roster of Georgian poets (Georgian Poetry Rogers 1). It seems that these poets were not "representative" of Georgian work as literary criticism has

chosen to remember it. In The Georgian Revolt 1910-1922. Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal, Robert H. Ross wrote of the Georgians:

...perhaps no group of poets since the Pre-Raphaelites has suffered more, or more ignominiously, from the widespread acceptance of over-simplified stereotypes and critical half-truths, even among readers who should know better. Often the Georgians have been misrepresented because of the ignorance of their subsequent critics, but even more often they have been the victims of pure critical spleen....The law of poetic averages alone--to say nothing of careful reading--would suggest to an unbiased observer that not every poet published in the five volumes of Georgian Poetry was a glib, pseudo-pastoral lark-lover. (ix)

1914 and Other Poems and Letters From America (1916) were both published posthumously. The latter was noteworthy, mainly for Henry James' introduction now called "lamentable" and "of an embarrassingly hero-worshipping character" by John Lehmann, though highly praised at the time (RE 82). Kenneth Millard, writing in 1991, sees in this volume a "rhetorically facetious method" satirizing Victorian travel-writing but also a prefiguring of F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby in its juxtaposition of the banal and the sublime (RE 82, Millard 157). A re-issuing of this volume in 1989 revealed that Brooke's Canadian reflections had soured, at least for one reviewer. Roger Mason labeled the essays "bland and presumptuous" and found them to be filled with "...the class sentiments and chauvinism of his kind in that time, when the globe was largely colored pink" (193-4).

Brooke also tried his hand at drama. His short play "Lithuania," so titled because the events were said to have actually occurred in that country, was produced shortly after his death at the Chicago Little Theater owing to a friendship he had struck up with the manager while in Chicago. The play is mechanical, "an exercise in melodramatic irony," making use of stock figures in a plot revolving around the murder of a long lost son. Christopher Hassall describes the play as poorly titled: "a pointless label unless that country were notorious for breeding homicides" (340). He asserts that "one might as usefully start calling Macbeth 'Scotland'" (340). A few lines near the play's end were accorded some measure of dramatic promise.

Brooke's Collected Poems (now the Poetical Works) was published shortly after his death and included both Poems 1911 and 1914 and Other Poems. A reviewer in Poetry commented on the hints of Swinburne and others as well as the "frankly playful" intent of the poems that was "charming" for some readers, a "serious defect" for others (Henderson 264). Brooke has been faulted not only for copying the sound of other poets' work, but the substance as well:

Too often he seems to record the emotional and imaginative experiences of someone other than himself. He had read widely, and his mind sometimes gave back what it had received before the process of transmutation was complete. The verses of a hundred poets echo in his own. (McCourt 151)

Over the course of the century, critics echoed these early remarks, some damning the work as derivative, others as belonging to a time irrecoverable. In a largely pictorial study of Brooke, Michael Hastings wrote,

If the poetry sounds mawkish and chillingly self-indulgent, it is because we cannot even pretend to grasp that particular brand of unctiousness [sic], that humour, that false sense of tranquility....When we laugh hysterically at the apparent idiocies in this [Grantchester] poem, we are really saying that this world never existed, that it is too implausible. (150-151)

This reading may just be Brooke's point. "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester" can be read as the speaker's satirical treatment of a utopian vision. At the time of his death, war meant the end of a glorious Edwardian summer for the nation. Brooke was crowned with laurels because he was a symbol of youth sacrificing himself for the good of England. Little magazines and newspapers printed verse tributes to Brooke for months, much of it drowning in sentimentality, some clearly built on the meter and rhyme of Brooke's most famous poems. Imitation may be a sincere form of flattery, but in Brooke's case it has proved nearly fatal for his reputation as a poet and has contributed to the trivializing and prettifying of his work. "The Great Lover" and "The Old Vicarage" have suffered acutely as a result of "a wide-spread imitation [that] ultimately creates antagonism towards the thing imitated" until a poem comes "to be judged not on the basis of its own very

considerable merits, but on those of the unspeakable brood of whimsies to which it has given rise" (McCourt 150).

Imitation is only one of the many reasons that Brooke has been the plaything of the whims of criticism. Christopher Hassall, author of the 1964 biography of Brooke, outlined the dominant views of the poetry by dividing them into three major camps:

There are readers who have recovered from an adolescent 'phase' of Brooke and lived ever afterwards in a state of resentful convalescence. Others, as if riled that he did not live to endure the horrors of the Somme, or have the foresight to see them coming, suppose that he looked at Hell through Georgian-tinted glasses, the victim of a doom of charm he apparently could not escape. Seldom do we find Brooke dispassionately acknowledged as a stage on a personal journey of self-discovery.... (532)

Hassall might well have replaced "readers" with "critics" in the above lines, as a survey of the scholarship has demonstrated.

Biographical Information

A constant critical question seems to be how to reconcile various facets of Brooke's character and work. For critics, character and work are an inseparable miasma, but an absorbing study nonetheless. Like his life and his legend, the stories are strangely different. Unable to add up this odd equation, a great number of the critical evaluations of Brooke's work take it apart piecemeal, mostly with an intent of doing no more than pointing to a line and attributing its sound to a poet of

an earlier day. All of these brief, critical studies admit to a continuing, if minute, interest in Brooke and his work. Scholars are perplexed enough to contribute several pages every few years to renew the question, "Who was Rupert Brooke?"

This question seems to have haunted, then eluded, those seeking an answer. For some, the answer is too hastily reached, perhaps concluded in disgust as a question impossible to answer and therefore found unimportant and unworthy of further investigation. Hynes succeeds in reducing Brooke to two pitying, scathing lines:

Poor Brooke: it is his destiny to live as a supremely poetical figure, shirt open and hair too long and profile perfect - a figure that appeals to that vast majority that doesn't read poetry, but knows what a poet should look like. But as a poet he is not immortal - he is only dead. (152)

Jon Stallworthy is kinder than Hynes, but he, too, finds two sentences a good fit for Brooke: "Rupert Brooke was not a War Poet. He is a poet of peace, a celebrant of friendship, love and laughter" (193).

For many, Brooke still remains an icon. An icon is considerably easier to discuss and represent than the layers of personality Brooke had and demonstrated through his poetry. Brooke's photograph, even Sherril Shell's Byronesque reproduction of Brooke's own devising (the one his friends thought revolutive enough to dub "Your Favorite Actress"), takes precedence over his poetry. In the 26 April 1915 edition

of the London Times, Winston Churchill wrote of Brooke's death as the loss of his "classical symmetry of mind and body" which began the wrongful perpetuation of a national icon and ideal-youthful beauty engaged in composing carefully groomed sonnets on the glory of war. Even Hassall's monumental 1964 biography has difficulty capturing an accurate representation of the poet as man. Hayden Carruth, reviewing the work in Poetry magazine, suggested that Hassall was able to do no more than rewrite Brooke's letters.

A high school literature textbook frames Brooke's life in this way,

Rupert Chawner Brooke was born in Rugby, August 3, 1887. His early education was at Rugby School, where his father was one of the masters...He entered Cambridge University...and made a distinguished record there both in scholarship and athletics. He enjoyed all sports and displayed near-professional skill in everything he tried...After his graduation Brooke made trips to Germany and to Italy. In 1913 Cambridge granted him a fellowship, and he made an extended tour of Canada, the United States, and the South Seas....Brooke came home to a country about to go to war and immediately enlisted in the Royal Navy...He did not reach his destination, dying on April 23....He was buried on the island [Skyros], thus fulfilling the prophecy of his sonnet "The Soldier," published just a few weeks before his death. In 1931 his grave was marked by a twice-life-size bronze statue. (Horn A Cavalcade of British Writing 509)

Such a reduction, nearly always accompanied by a portrait of the poet, paints a glowing figure, the one most common to today's reader. We hear of the athletic prowess, the hero fulfilling the "prophecy," rather than the fevers and bouts of pinkeye that kept the scholar off of the playing field. The cult of Brooke is still offered up to the high school reader,

but often "The Soldier," his most famous (or notorious) poem, is the only piece anthologized--as the archetypal statement of the "old Lie" that Wilfred Owen exposed in "Dulce et Decorum Est."

The soldier-poet Edmund Blunden, a contemporary of Brooke's, introduces Brooke in his brief study War Poets: 1914-1918 as "a well-known personality," an epithet describing the public persona. Like his stage performances, this was only an image of beauty that posed well but spoke lines badly before the audience. Brooke's friend Sybil Pye wrote of his stage presence:

In spite of his expressive quality of voice and rare power of employing it, he had not, I think, any marked talent for acting. For this reason he was chosen to declaim only the chorus parts in the performances of Marlowe's Faustus...Even this was not wholly a success. We missed at the performance all the charm of those rehearsals of his part with lovely gestures, which took place daily in the vicarage garden, when he would choose as audience the fat bull-terrier that belonged to the house...he would appeal with passion to the dog, giving chance observers the joy the audience was to miss. (377-378)

From this description, a critic might conclude that the "poses" of Brooke's poetry are not false, but a talent underdeveloped and a fear or abhorrence of an audience that might pass judgement, driving the poet to make too many concessions or evasions for his censors.

Modernists were to write from and for the self, relegating the problem of an audience to a lesser role in their work. Georgian poets were acutely aware of their audience. As one of

their number, Brooke may seem to have taken note of his audience in much the same way that his contemporaries did. Instead, what he so successfully accomplished, for the careful reader, was an offering to his audience of seemingly legitimate sentiment soon revealed to be a deeper truth buried in poetic trappings. Reading Brooke, one gets the sense that he was sharing an elaborate private joke with those inclined to listen to this poet of many moods.

Brooke was plagued by self-doubts and routinely burdened his friends with his emotional difficulties, a fact which may have accounted for Maynard Keynes comment on Brooke's death; "In spite of all we have ever said, I find myself crying for him" (Hassall 516). Leonard Woolf believed Brooke had a cruel streak while E. M. Forster did not envy anyone seeking Brooke's sympathy (Lehmann Rupert Brooke: His Life and His Legend 4). In 1912 he suffered a nervous breakdown and subjected his friends to a year-long tirade of abuse in lengthy, rambling letters.

Born the second of three sons, Brooke was a deep disappointment to his mother, who had wished for a daughter. Brooke brooded over his mother's sense of loss and the constant remarks of strangers on his skin that was "clear as a girl's." He was inclined to comment that his mother's wish for him to be a girl had created a feminine aspect in his nature, invariably mentioned each time he professed, in letters to

female friends, to understand woman's nature. At other times he took refuge in his maleness; "I am a Man. Your letter was almost impossible to understand" (Letters 399). Yeats might have dubbed him "the handsomest young man in England" but time and again his contemporaries refer to him as beautiful. The editor of The Nation, Henry Nevinston, amended this to the more accurate "almost ludicrously beautiful." His beauty owed much to its youthful ambiguity.

Brooke detested feminism even while his generation was beginning to enjoy a freer mingling of the sexes, and new doctrines of equality--such as the socialism he lightly professed--were gaining ascendancy. He placed women on pedestals or trod them underfoot. He regarded Noel Olivier as an ideal love, a cold muse and a divine torment, perhaps thought her to be an instrument necessary for composing poetry. She seldom saw Brooke and was aloof in her speech and letters but acquired an importance in Brooke's life because she was unsullied and five years younger than the poet, which made it easy for him to adopt a paternal tone in letters and address her with his favorite pet name for female correspondents, "child." Noel was studying for a career in medicine, a pursuit which left her with little time and even less interest in Brooke's affections. He was incensed when Margery, Noel's older sister, cautioned Brooke in 1909 that Noel was too young to receive his attentions. Brooke quoted

her, "Love, for a woman, she said, destroyed everything else. It filled her whole life, stopped her developing, absorbed her." Brooke concluded:

...one must only marry the quite poor, unimportant, people, who don't matter being spoilt. The dream of any combined and increased splendour of the splendid you, or the splendid I, with the splendid X - that's gone. We can't marry X. At the best we can, if we try to marry X, marry her corpse.
(Letters 181)

Brooke had an unhappy romance with Katherine (Ka) Cox, a close friend he badgered into having an affair during his nervous breakdown. Ka was a sympathetic, motherly figure much more inclined to lend Brooke support than his domineering mother, whom he commonly dubbed "the Ranee" in letters to his friends. After the affair, Brooke abused Ka as a fallen woman. Much later he sent her a statuette of the Madonna and child, as a symbol of what she had been to him. It may also have been a memorial to their miscarried (or aborted) child (Laskowski 16). When in love with the actress Cathleen Nesbitt, Brooke counseled her to leave acting, a profession he believed to be a poor one for women, one which induced them to be less than pure. In short, Brooke could find no balance in his view of women. He may have been only slightly in jest when he wrote to Cathleen on his departure for America, "You'll not take it in a bad sense if I tell you that there was never anybody so nice to go away from as you!" (Letters 462).

Brooke boasted in a letter of 1909 to his cousin Erica Cotterill, "As for people in love with people of the same sex

as themselves, I know all about it, & will tell you sometime" (Letters 173). Boys at Rugby fell in love with Brooke, and it appears that he played up to them. Brooke describes one such incident in a letter of 1906, covering the event with the "purple" rhetoric of his then-decadent phase:

A purple and terrific scandal has arisen around me...It began by Dean catching me one day & informing me that 'a gentleman' in another House, had been trying to buy a photo of me: Dean was willing, but my leave was necessary. My enormous conceit was swelled even more - and I gave leave. Dean unluckily mentioned the name of the House. And there were who overheard...and theorized - to my much discomfort...But I secretly made inquiries and found it was one I knew of old - one with the form of a Greek God, the face of Hyacinthus, the mouth of Antinous, eyes like a sunset...It appears that the madman worships me at a pale distance: which is embarrassing but purple... (41)

While he was enjoying playing a part in a schoolboy drama, Brooke was genuinely infatuated with a classmate at the time. These purple beginnings eventually led to certain events one night in 1909 at the Orchard. He had decided to unburden himself of chastity and make the "jump from virginity to Knowledge" by seducing Denham Russell-Smith, the younger brother of a classmate. Brooke paints the encounter, in an explicitly unabashed letter to James Strachey, as a deliberate, even cold decision in which he thought of Denham "entirely in the third person" (qtd. in Delany 78-80).

In the same letter he seems to be seeking some sort of knowledge: "At length, I thought, I shall know something of all that James and Norton and Maynard and Lytton know and hold over me." In this respect, Lehmann discusses Brooke's nervous

breakdown at Lulworth in 1912, which involved his relationship with Ka: "It is not inconceivable that what really upset him was a hidden fear that Lytton and his friends thought that he was more attracted by his own rather than the other sex, and were not taking him seriously as a lover of women" (6).

Re-thinking Brooke

Given the confusion in Brooke's personal life brought to light in recent biographies, the many "poses" critics see in his poetry merit reevaluation. National symbols are often wrongly misappropriated, especially so in the case of Brooke. Most critics conclude that he came to view war as "clean" physically and morally, accepting it as a welcome reprieve from the tangle of his personal life. For England, "1914" spoke with a national voice--not Brooke's.

The advent of gender studies, the slow reappraisal taking place between Georgian and Modernist poetry, and the new insights on Brooke's character uncovered in recent biographies suggest enough distance from the poet to begin opening up his work in new ways. This thesis broaches Brooke's poetry for reappraisal in three broad areas: Brooke as "war poet," conflicted personality, and nascent modernist. Especially crucial to my reevaluation are Brooke's (mis)conceptions of himself and the ways in which these contribute to his refashioning poetry into what may be called a nascent

modernist approach. Upon closer examination, Brooke is more individually and artistically complicated than he has often been portrayed.

Chapter Two addresses Brooke as a war poet and England's appropriation of both the war sonnets, "1914," and Brooke's image as the glorious sacrifice of youth for the nation. These sonnets also speak to Brooke's inner struggles with "all the little emptiness of love." ("Peace" Poetical Works 19) The third chapter is an exploration of Brooke's conception of the self and his sexual orientation. His poetry often constructs love in terms of denial and death. It is imperative that critics evaluate if the poses Brooke is accused of striking are as insincere as many have believed them to be. Although Brooke's early work is cast in the mold of the Decadents, his focus on love and relationships in the poetry make use of his inner struggles as a template for setting forth a new creed of "realism" that can be read as artistic and social commentary.

Brooke's achievements have gone underappreciated. In Chapter Four he is read as a nascent modernist in his use of realism and ironic voice, a self-conscious playing with the conventions of poetry (which act as his commentary on the ineffectuality of old forms), a rejection of the past (evidenced in his depictions of Christianity), and a speaker who is self-conscious but refuses to distance the reader. In short, what appears conventional in Brooke is not.

II. A "WAR POET": "...MORE TOURIST STILL THAN SOLDIER..."

My brother D.B. was in the Army....I remember Allie once asked him wasn't it sort of good that he was in the war because he was a writer and it gave him a lot to write about and all. He made Allie go get his baseball mitt and then he asked him who was the best war poet, Rupert Brooke or Emily Dickinson. Allie said Emily Dickinson.

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In August of 1914, Brooke was twenty-seven, and recently returned to England from the South Seas. In that same month, England went to war. Brooke soon enlisted, having no more knowledge of warfare than, he admitted, a vague memory of khaki during Rugby drills. He lamented, "I can't fly or drive a car or ride a horse sufficiently well..." (Letters 608). He was, along with most of the nation, magnificently unprepared for the demands of war. As a sub-lieutenant in the naval division, he never saw battle. Hassall reports, "Brooke never glorified war...but he celebrated in exultation the discovery of a moral purpose" (472).

Whether he was, as some argue, the figure of the happy warrior or merely infected with a belief in the morality of war, it is certain that war became a metaphor for Brooke. Most early critics discussed "1914" as jingoistic, but it seems Brooke's greater concern was his inner struggles and how the war could affect these. Many critics now agree that war became a balm for Brooke, one allowing him both to purge questions that led to his nervous breakdown and to reject what he loathed in himself and others. Whether or not war became a

cause for Brooke to take refuge in, it is certain that the war has obscured for most readers of Brooke all but "1914," rendered immortal when Dean Inge of St. Paul's Cathedral read "The Soldier" and commended the sonnet's sentiment in his Easter sermon a few weeks before Brooke's death.

Dean Inge's sermon was reported in The Times on April 5, 1915, along with his inclusion of "a beautiful little poem" that was "[t]he enthusiasm of a pure and elevated patriotism, free from hate, bitterness, and fear [that] had never found a nobler expression." "The Soldier" was reprinted in full, and Inge found the sonnet "a worthy thought that the dust out of which the happy warrior's body was once compacted was consecrated for ever by the cause for which he died." Brooke's War Sonnets had become the property of the nation, quickly perpetuated and consumed in pamphlet form.

Mikhail Bakhtin proposed that an individual's speech will always include the speech of others to varying degrees. Some speech is privileged over others to an extent that it suppresses the voice of the individual:

The tendency to assimilate others' discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual's ideological becoming, in the most fundamental sense. Another's discourse performs here no longer as information...models and so forth -- but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior; it performs here as authoritative discourse, and internally persuasive discourse....The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own...we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected

with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past. It is a prior discourse....It enters our verbal consciousness as a compact and indivisible mass; one must either totally affirm it, or totally reject it. It is indissolubly fused with its authority -- with political power...and it stands and falls together with that authority....It is not surrounded by an agitated and cacophonous dialogic life.... (783-784)

Brooke's "1914 Sonnets" are part of an authoritative discourse, the promotion of England's rightful place in the Great War. Many critics of Brooke's work agree that his voice is absent from this group of five poems. The personal reminiscences of England so characteristic of most of his poetry are not here. An "agitated and cacophonous dialogic life" is not found in the monologic distancing of the sonnets. Hynes reflects, "...Brooke's war poems show no sign of his natural wittiness. It is at first glance surprising, though, that they also completely lack that ugliness that he had been at such pains to insert into his 'ugly poems.'" (Edwardian Occasions 149-150). Indeed, the realism Brooke had been working towards in earlier poems is absent in "1914." These five sonnets did not include a personal reaction to the ugliness and horrors of war as did those of later war poets. The sight of fleeing Belgian refugees that so disturbed Brooke did not find their way into these codified lines. "1914 Sonnets" also invoke past, classical poetic traditions in their portrayal of war. For that reason, they were almost instantly famous--and infamous. Caesar writes of "The

Soldier," "[t]he racial, and implicitly racist arrogance of these lines hardly requires comment" (54).

The sonnets of 1914 became war propaganda, political doctrine, the nation's war cry couched in rhyme, with Dean Inge's blessing. Hassall observes that the lines of "Peace" have "...all the look of a public utterance..." (467). No less authority than God (a strange muse to call on for someone professing to be an agnostic) is invoked in the first line, and the youth in the poem are depicted as shaken awake from their state of slumber--be it a slumber forgetful of religion, morality or patriotism. While the sleepers may have awakened, they do so only to die for their country: They wake, stretch, and find "the worst friend and enemy" in Death. The speaker assures the youth that nothing is lost; "Naught broken save this body, lost but breath." They cannot speak nor does the speaker want them to. The sonnet is an instruction from above for receiving death nobly, "...depreciating body, breath, agony and death." It is "[t]his effort [that] marks the poem as propaganda for war: the grim realities are made bland and the word 'war' itself is excluded" (Parfitt 22).

The sonnet sequence perpetuates, too, a prior discourse, a way of talking about war that is distinctly nineteenth century. Siegfried Sassoon regarded some of his own early war poems as belonging to the poetic ideals of the past--having an affinity with Brooke's War Sonnets:

...while learning to be a second-lieutenant I was unable to write anything at all, with the exception of a short poem called 'Absolution', manifestly influenced by Rupert Brooke's famous sonnet-sequence. The significance of my too nobly worded lines was that they expressed the typical self-glorifying feelings of a young man about to go to the Front for the first time. The poem subsequently found favour with middle-aged reviewers.... (17)

Geoffrey Matthews, writing at mid-century, described the differences between the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Rupert Brooke "...as the living is distinguished not from the dead, but from the unborn." (34). He concluded that the war sonnets, especially "The Soldier" and "The Dead," were no more than "...poems celebrating the export of English goods" (33).

Brooke's poems, at once so unquestioningly embraced in the early months of 1915, were soon rejected as speaking a lie. The war Brooke wrote of was not the one taking place. Weapons and tactics of warfare changed drastically while Brooke's sonnets were nineteenth-century relics. Hynes called the sonnets "plaster rhetoric" empty of Brooke's voice and filled with that of the nation:

...in a poem like 'The Soldier', Brooke had to fill an empty rhetoric with too-easily weighted words--England four times and English twice in fourteen lines, heart, dreams, heaven, eternal mind, and the vaguely comforting somewhere--to falsify the truth of dying, and glorify death by calling it sacrifice. (Edwardian Occasions 150)

George Parfitt agrees with Hynes, citing the conventional use of the sonnet form and the absence of specific detail and humor. The best of Brooke's earlier poetry is simplified and "[t]he poet's voice is solemn and sonorous" (21).

George Parfitt, Adrian Caesar, Robert Wohl and others have discussed Brooke's obsession with war as a cleanser. Brooke viewed war as an escape from his emotional entanglements and wrote to his friends of his new-found views. To John Drinkwater he wrote that war is

Better than coughing out a civilian soul amid bedclothes and disinfectant and gulping medicines in 1950...I had hopes that England'd get on her legs again, achieve youth and merriment, and slough the things I loathe--capitalism and feminism and hermaphroditism and the rest...Come and die. It'll be great fun. (Letters 654-655).

Robert Wohl views Brooke's letter to Drinkwater as "...full of contradictions. Like all of Brooke's letters, it contains a certain measure of stiff-upper-lipped bravura and cannot be taken as an exact transcription of his feelings" (90). For Wohl, too, war represented Brooke's "escape from the dreary sleep of middle age and conventional living" as well as a covering over of his "shame" (89). He does, however, point out that Brooke did not initially view war as a solution to his personal problems; "'this damned war business' merely interfered with his vacation plans for August..." (88).

In the lines from "Peace," "half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary, / And all the little emptiness of love!", Parfitt sees confirmation of the views Brooke upheld to Drinkwater, "What is cleansed here is the sickness of dishonour, effeminacy and love, and sickness is treated in a suggestive sequence. War makes Man; love is associated with dirt and semi-emasculatation...." (PW 19, Parfitt 22) Brooke frequently

wrote of Lytton Stratchey as a "half-man" a term meant to attack Stratchey's sexual orientation and perhaps his Bloomsbury and pacifist views as well. Delany believes that Brooke "...could enjoy the company of 'half-man'--he was, after all, half one himself--but he wanted them to stay in their place, which was among their own kind" (181). Brooke's own suspicion that he himself was something of a "half-man" (bisexual) could be cleared in the war, an endeavor he believed would make a "real man" of him, even if death was the required route to achieve this end.

Brooke's ambivalence regarding his sexuality emerges in "Peace" as the "shame" the speaker has known, but the questions are more fully approached in a number of other poems as well. Among them are "Dead Men's Love" which places a dead "damned successful poet" and "a woman like the Sun" in hell, their condition as yet unrevealed to them. The speaker writes of their physical pleasure turned sour when they realize their deadness in the last lines, "Chill air on lip and breast, / And, with a sick surprise, / The emptiness of eyes" (PW 83). Clearly, the poet implies that physical love equals a spiritual death. Critics have seen "the culmination of Brooke's puritanical obsession with sex...in 'Mary and Gabriel'" in which the poet "escapes from this physical dirtiness by writing a poem about the Immaculate Conception!" (Moeyes 462).

It would seem that Brooke, in Bakhtinian terms, had found authoritative discourse internally persuasive, and made the cause of war his own. If he did embrace the war, it was in a manner his reading public did not fully realize. Brooke may have sanctioned the idea of dying in battle as noble in his brief war oeuvre, but individual lines suggest that war and death bring an absolution of personal failure--an ennobling end in its own right. In the sonnet "Peace" the speaker writes of death "we, who have known shame, we have found / release there" (PW 19). The War Sonnets may package the idea of death in war as noble, but for Brooke they seem to have meant something entirely different, among others an escape from "all the little emptiness of love" ("Peace" PW 19). Paul Moeyes writes, "The War Sonnets are hardly concerned with the war, and not at all with victory. They are about early death, and the desirability of early death, and...an escape from growing old" (466).

Hassall wrote that Brooke found a moral purpose in war, and that he seems to have been trying to convince himself of the wisdom of conventional morality and a return to the Victorian puritanism he had battled for so long. And indeed his letters and journals reveal his preoccupation with marriage. He wrote to Dudley Ward:

I spend my odd moments in a grave perplexity, about marriage. I rather feel that if the war hadn't happened, I'd have gone on eyeing the brink, hesitating, and deferring, never quite blinded enough not to say 'Well, tomorrow'll do-

- ' until I relapsed into a friendly celibate middle-age, the amiable bachelor...or livelier Sayle, or a less distinguished Eddie with my rooms and bedder and a host of young friends...Now, if I knew I'd be shot, I'd marry in a flash--oh any of two or three ladies...I agonize every night. At times I want to wire to almost anybody 'Will you be my widow?' And later, I sigh that I'll be free and the world before me, after the war. (Letters 636)

"Eddie" refers to Sir Edward Marsh, like Sayle, a homosexual, though Marsh was perhaps chastely so (Rogers GP 15). Brooke's apparent envy of Marsh in this passage suggests his ambivalence, even aversion to his ideas about physical love in general, but settling the question of his sexual identity seems not to have been possible for Brooke. Even his prose in this passage reflects this reluctance to commit to a definite identity. His double negation is especially telling--"never quite blinded enough not to say...." The struggle to middle-age will be difficult, dependent on a series of hedgings and a "relapse" to reach the desired (though likely less than ideal if the reader keeps in mind Brooke's love of youth and wish to escape middle age) "friendly celibate" stage.

Brooke's earlier poems reveal his notions of matrimony. "Menelaus and Helen" distances the speaker's emotions through classical allusion, but the Puritanical revulsion through which he viewed marriage controls the poem. Brooke asks himself, "So far the poet. How should he behold / That journey home, the long connubial years?" (PW 125). In the years following the war Menelaus "waxes garrulous" and Helen "bears / Child on legitimate child, becomes a scold, / Haggard with

virtue" still pining for Paris, her "dry shanks" "twitching" at his name. Clearly Paris won the better fate in the poet's mind as "marital disharmony in old age is compared disadvantageously with death" (Caesar 31).

If the speaker in the war poems does uphold death as a good, a preservative of youth, it is not merely conformity to battle-speak but was something Brooke seems to have believed in as clean, good, and decidedly less unnerving than matrimony, although both war and marriage were ideas he could only speculate on. His juvenilia frequently addressed the world after death and his body of work continues on this theme. The War Sonnets, in this respect, do not depart from the questions he asked in poetry prior to war. They seem strange, even unfortunate, mainly due to the fact that they are read under the rubric of war poetry while failing at an "authentic" approach to World War I. Their greater misfortune is that they seem to have so little of their author at his best in them, losing both the specificity and wit of Brooke, as Hynes lamented, as well as the tension arising from inner conflict that is a hallmark of Brooke's best poetry.

Brooke became increasingly preoccupied with death during the war. Though it is the theme of many of his earlier poems, he became convinced that he would die in war and began writing farewell letters to family and friends a month before his death. With this knowledge in mind, the War Sonnets can be

read as a hymn to the poet's passing, masquerading as the voice of the nation. In "Safety" the speaker imagines death to be security and rest: "Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men fall; / And if these poor limbs die, safest of all" (PW 20). "Safety" is redefined in these lines which act to distance the sentiment. What Brooke achieved, it seems, was a poor weaving of national and personal voice. Parfitt writes, "it appears that the poet has neither responded, before the war, to the beauty and grotesquerie of human bodies, or is suppressing his memories in the cause of a positive ideology of war" (23).

Active suppression appears to be taking place in the war sonnets. In "Peace" the youth going off to war are depicted "as swimmers into cleanness leaping." This water image is carried over from other poems that seek resolution at last in bodies of water. "Song of the Beasts" (1906) speaks of the "shameful night" in which "men no longer, but less and more, / Beast and God" seek an outlet (PW 168). The speaker asks parenthetically, "(Have you not felt the quick fires that creep / Through the hungry flesh, and the lust of delight, / And hot secrets that day cannot say?)" The speaker asks those answering to follow him "Beyond lust and fear" to waters "quiet and clear, / To the black unresting plains of the calling sea." In "Tiare Tahiti" (1914) two lovers find resolution in a passionless lagoon. They "[w]ash the mind of

foolishness" while "floating lazy, half-asleep" in a dulled, pleasant state that shares no more than a chaste kiss (PW 27). The speaker in "Peace" is eager to reach these calm waters, "leaping" into death in war. In linking these water images finally to the War Sonnets, Caesar writes, "Here it is expressed without the linguistic trappings of decadence, and converted into a patriotic rhetoric. But the ideas expressed sublimate sexuality into death wish" (53).

Brooke's sonnets sound hollow because the speaker feels the need to supply or cover over a lack in his own life. Brooke accepted authoritative discourse, and to an extent considered accepting the conventional sentiments of his day on love and marriage, as internally persuasive. Parfitt writes, "Brooke and his cleansing were...promoted by the 'official' nation; and Brooke became the salient factor in a martyrology of war" (24). The pose seemed easy enough to attempt for someone not yet gone to war and was even more heartily embraced by the nation, although it seems that war was only an abstraction, a convenient form for Brooke to place his concerns within.

Suppression of self can be seen as the commonality the war sonnets share. Effusive in their seeming praise of war as a noble cause, they are instead Brooke's cleanser. It would seem that two themes are warring in the sonnets. On the surface, they are the nation's beliefs about the nobility of war, but they are also Brooke's reworking of death as desireable, a

theme prevalent in his pre-war poems. In many respects, the War Sonnets are the consummation with Brooke's beloved, "safely located in realms beyond the earthly." A fragment written shortly before his death describes the death of fellow soldiers in terms of water imagery--and a deep peace found: "He wears / The ungathered blossom of quiet; stiller he / Than a deep well at noon, or lovers met;" (PW 297). Death surpasses the splendor of love in these fragments. "Implicitly celebrated" in the War Sonnets is "the act of sacrificial love" seen in his earlier poems (Caesar 32, 55).

Escape through death is both a cleanser and a consummation in the war sonnets. Brooke's swimmers in "Peace" may be shedding "a world grown old and cold and weary" but these figures have been called a "pastoral-erotic" vision (PW 19, Wright 122). At once the poet sees the magnificent waste of these lives and accords this a near-perfect state. But into what are the swimmers leaping? Death? A baptism? Most readings of this poem register a basic sincerity and directness on the part of the speaker, but baptism and death could mean both release and consummation in this sonnet. Why has Brooke suddenly called upon God in this sonnet? He once wrote to a friend of the curious habit of Victorian poets to "call suddenly upon God" in the last line, irrespective of whatever subject matter had come before. In a study of E. M. Forster, Parminder Bakshi writes "The condemnation of homoerotic desire

in Christian doctrines prompted many homosexual writers to alleviate their guilt by withdrawing further into religiosity" (194). It is possible that the invocation of God in the opening line of "Peace" is a sardonic facade. Brooke's War Sonnets may be high-toned, but they are strangely un-Christian as well. J. M. Gregson is not the first to note the "...curiously amorphous after-life which certainly does not reflect the conventional Christian ethic" in "The Soldier" (19). The London Times, too, reported on April 5, 1915 that Dean Inge had found that his poem "...fell somewhat short of Isaiah's vision and still more of the Christian hope." This overt embrace of God and Christianity may in fact be a rejection of past traditions, a trapping not unlike the fragments of Christian services and prayers found in some Modernist writings, such as T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land."

As Firchow interprets the poem, "Peace" is,

peace as it is conventionally defined but not conventionally understood: it is peace, the absence of war. Such peace belongs to a world of moral decay and the neglect of honor, a world without real men, whose dreary and unclean songs waste themselves upon the trivial subject of sexual relations. It is an old and sinful world that is being smashed, not for the first time, by the hand of God, who does not like such worlds...A new world is about to be born...in a daring leap heavenward--a dynamic existence vitalized by the risk of death and informed by a holy mission, toward a Love that is not merely love, not the petty amatory preoccupations of degenerates who have nothing better to do, but a Love that in its religious grandeur overwhelms all, even and especially one's own self. ("The Death..." 130)

This explication seems ironic considering that Brooke is one of these who has "wasted" his poetry on the "trivial subject" of relationships. At a time when Brooke was struggling with the idea of marriage, which he finally seems to have rejected, "Peace" may have been a celebration or coming awareness of his own identity, and the seeming religiosity a studied "hiding" of his beliefs--a safe facade. How are we to read "Now God be thanked who has matched us with this hour?" The absolution from sins is sincere, perhaps ironic. The comradeship of war does seem to have suited Brooke, as it found him in the company of many of his old friends while he could write sincerely affectionate letters to female friends far away in England.

And yet, as someone seeking fame, it may have seemed "safe" to buy fame through the vein of nationalism. Brooke was concerned with his fame, and lack of it. At the age of thirteen his autograph book listed "obscurity" as his most acute misery (Hassall 32-33). Shortly before his death, he wrote to his friend Dudley Ward, advising him on which papers to keep: "...why keep anything? Well, I might turn out to be eminent and biographiable." He saw it fit to add, "If so, let them know the poor truths. Rather pathetic this." (Letters 671). Brooke thought himself a failure (perhaps not without reason, as his mother often closed a typical letter with "why are you so unsatisfactory?"). In 1915, he wrote to Edward

Marsh, "I wish I'd written more. I've been such a failure" (Letters 669). If he did wish to become famous, he had the means--poetic technique and the theme of war--at hand. As a boy Brooke was accustomed to entering the poetry challenges in the Westminster Gazette in which a theme was given, along with suggested details. Brooke was a winner more than once in these formulaic challenges. His writings on war display some of this trained technique, a technique that is ultimately synthetic and relying "on harmonious generalisations which evade and discourage recognition of reality" (Parfitt 34).

It seems unfair to accuse the poet of selling-out to the rhetoric of war. Others appropriated his words as propaganda. It is possible, though, that his last "Fragment" penned shortly before death in April 1915 exhibits a greater understanding of, if not the war, at least himself. This poem has outgrown Brooke's desire to reconstruct himself in the public eye in "The Soldier." Kenneth Millard calls "The Soldier" an "...artistic expedient by which the tensions and contradictions of the human personality are evaded." Brooke was instead, "...imagining himself dead and creating himself again in the mind of his potential audience." (Millard 178).

In "Fragment" (PW 17) Brooke pictures himself, and his shipmates, as an absence, a ghost, in these lines:

I would have thought of them
-- Heedless, within a week of battle -- in pity,
Pride in their strength and in the weight and firmness
And link'd beauty of bodies, and pity that

This gay machine of splendour'ld soon be broken,
Thought little of, pashed, scattered...

Only, always,
I could but see them -- against the lamplight -- pass
Like coloured shadows, thinner than filmy glass,
Slight bubbles, fainter than the wave's faint light,
That broke to phosphorus out in the night,
Perishing things and strange ghosts -- soon to die
To other ghosts -- this one, or that, or I.

By speaking of himself as an absence, he is already removed from his world, from battle, and on his ship he is harbored in a "safe" body of water, the Aegean. His vision is not unlike the yearning toward the bodies of water he depicted as death and release in his poems. And yet, as a ghost, the speaker suggests that he can move beyond his realm and gain a new perspective--one that certainly seems to be forthcoming when comparing this fragment to the monological War Sonnets. The second stanza speaks of "pity" for his comrades, a goal that Owen claimed for his own war poems (Blunden 32). Brooke considers pity twice, and sees the beauty in men not only in their corporeal form, but in the metaphysical "coloured shadows" that are a distinctly Brookean way of writing. He subsequently devotes the bulk of the third and last stanza to these "perishing things." J. M. Gregson reminds the reader that this is a "slight piece, and presumably without the benefit of revision, but in its discarding of rhyme and solemn music, its conversational ease, there is a very different tone from that of the 1914 sonnets" (20).

This fragment, and others he left behind, demonstrate that Brooke was exploring new directions and a marked departure from the War Sonnets. Frank Field suggests that "Fragment" demonstrates that Brooke "was moving towards a concern for others as well as for himself" (120). "Other Fragments" is distinctly Brooke's in its play of voices (PW 205-207). Brooke opens with classical allusions and sets them off against the present conflict. "The stokers" in the trenches are prefigured with the antique line, "Death and Sleep / Bear many a young Sarpedon home." While Brooke stays true to form with a classical frame, the second section of the poem (if, indeed, this collection of fragments would eventually have composed a single poem) provides space for his commentary on the present state of conflict.

'When Nobby tried', the stokers say
 'To stop a shrapnel with his belly
He away,
 He left a lump of bleeding jelly'.
But he went out, did Nobby Clark
 Upon the illimitable dark,
Out of the fields where soldiers stray,
 Beyond parades, beyond reveille.

The poem succeeds in much the same way that "Menelaus and Helen" does. Brooke uses the classics as gilt edging and then offers his own commentary--on marriage in "Menelaus and Helen" and war in "Other Fragments." Additionally, Field views this unfinished piece as anticipating "the later satirical mode of Sassoon and Owen" (120).

The battles Brooke fought were internal. To the rest of the world, the critics and poets who were to come after, the poems looked like shadow-battles. Brooke is accused of posing in the poetry, but in his verse the search for identity moved beyond the poses his juvenile poems strike. In many respects, the War Sonnets' posing is not so much a relapse into Brooke's juvenilia as, perhaps, a lapse in his poetic sensibilities. Both the fragments following the War Sonnets and the poetry preceding the war show him to have been honing his voice more skillfully than "1914" does. Knowing who he was and resolving the gender/love crisis that seemed to be the cause of his nervous breakdown of 1912 occupied a great deal of the poetry and did lead to some posing. What is at issue, however, is, as Caesar relates, "...the kind of pose adopted, and the expression of various attitudes and emotional states underlying the pretentiousness which do not seem to me necessarily 'fake', or necessarily unimportant in understanding Brooke's development" (16). While this interpretation opens Brooke's poetry in the next chapter, one suspects that he is not a poseur--the chameleon--that critics expect him to be.

III. "...A LITTLE BLASPHEMOUS AMONG BLASPHEMERS, SLIGHTLY INSINCERE TO MYSELF..."

At mid-century Geoffrey Matthews wrote, "with Brooke one can never be sure if his parodies, which were deliberate enough, are just for the guileless fun of the moment, or if, like Eliot's, they are meant as criticism of attitudes" (29). Matthews decided that Brooke's parodies were guileless fun-- "usually," a qualifier he is wise to apply. Peter Firchow writes of Brooke's "extraordinarily complex personality" that manifests itself in the poetry as "...many voices, and...he suited...each voice to the public audience (or private friend) he happened to be looking up, down or sideways at" ("An Unsentimental..." 184). Brooke's voices have been misconstrued as muddy tone. His ironic unsentimentality--that is, a slightly cynical wit tempered with self-deprecating good humor--is often misread as a simplification of the poetry and man resulting from critical visions that ignore or exaggerate Brooke's inner turmoil. Additionally, Brooke is apt to be misread because too many critical obstacles are in place for the contemporary reader of Brooke. He appears neither modern, nor sincere when constructed as a War Poet. The challenge Brooke seems to have faced in life is much like the one critics of his work face today--an identity crisis: Who was Rupert Brooke?

Brooke once wrote to his friend Geoffrey Keynes:

...today I return to Cambridge...there I shall find all the witty and clever people running one another down again. And I shall be rather witty and rather clever & I shall spend my time pretending to admire what I think humorous or impressive in me to admire. Even more than yourself I attempt to be 'all things to all men'; rather 'cultured' among the cultured, faintly athletic among athletes, a little blasphemous among blasphemers, slightly insincere to myself...However, there are advantages in being a hypocrite, aren't there? One becomes God-like in this at least, that one laughs at all the other hypocrites. (Letters 73)

This early letter (1907) points to the manner in which Brooke surveyed and appeared to conform to the atmosphere around him. Casting himself in the role of a "God-like" hypocrite absolved him from the sins of both conformity and nonconformity. Calling himself a hypocrite could have been meant as a comfortable, self-assigned epithet for the poet and man who was not able to come to terms with conflicting aspects of himself, and perhaps his art.

During his school days, Brooke began what critics have called a "compartmentalizing" of his life, cultivating friendships with groups mutually ignorant of the other's existence. His circles of friends, especially during his days at Cambridge, often held widely divergent views. The Apostles, or Conversazione Society, was an all-male secret discussion group whose members, Lytton Strachey and E. M. Forster among them, were openly homosexual. This group contributed to Brooke's near-mastery of abstract concepts and ideas in his poetry. His circle of neo-Pagan friends practiced the "simple

life" inspired in part by some of the participants' education at progressive schools such as Bedales. This group was composed in part by the granddaughters of Charles Darwin and promoted open and honest, though chaste, communication between the sexes and revelled in unchaperoned outings in rural settings.

The overlap, and some resulting romantic entanglements, of these two groups caused Brooke much consternation. Adrian Caesar suggests that by 1913 Brooke felt that,

Both groups were now considered to be 'dirty' and to have sacrificed their idealism to sexual philanderings which he could not tolerate. Particularly abhorrent to Brooke was the mixing of the two groups. The implication is that Brooke felt that one ought to be either homosexual or heterosexual but certainly not both. He projects his own self-disgust with his bi-sexuality onto other people, and strives from now on to live a committedly heterosexual life in a considerably more conservative mileau. (49)

Brooke's incomprehension, or denial of, his own identity led him to depict love, and visions of love, in terms of denial. "Dead Men's Love" is perhaps the most striking example. Not only are the two lovers in this poem dead, but Brooke places them in hell. The destruction love brings culminates in the last line when they look at each other and find, "with a sick surprise, / The emptiness of eyes" (PW 83). Brooke's notions of love and relationships could often take a morbid tone. He once wrote to Hugh Popham that he wished to sneak into the British Museum and--as Delany reports--"spend the night

embracing a female mummy; he had heard that most had died of syphilis, but he hoped to find a clean one" (180).

Laskowski writes, "For Brooke, love, to be worthwhile and satisfying, must somehow become disembodied, and several of his poems describe that condition...Brooke's favorite trope for the perfectibility of love is thus the ghost" (42-43). Conversely, Brooke's realism often takes the form of anti-romanticism and a focus on ugly bodies or even the figurative dismemberment of the body--that is, discussing individually the beauty of hands, hair, etc.--as though he could not accept or respond to the body composite as a beautiful or real object. Millard writes,

Brooke's physical existence is perpetually dissected, detached, and alien...a conspicuous absence of human life, and is accompanied by the disintegration of the body into 'fingers', 'hair', 'voices', and 'footprints'...."The Busy Heart" and "The Great Lover" represent a breakdown of faith in human relationships. (166-167)

For someone who was often described as the embodiment of poetry, the absence of bodies in Brooke's work is ironic.

Caesar finds the kinds of poses Brooke adopts less than sincere but not entirely false or unimportant in his development. Even the War Sonnets do not break away entirely from the poses Caesar suggests Brooke was accustomed to adopting. The War Sonnets, he writes, are "the corollary of his aesthetic, emotional, and psychological experiences up to this time" (14). By this Caesar means that Brooke's emotional states and attitudes underlie his seeming pretensions.

Modeling decadent writers may have contributed to Brooke's "poses." The unwillingness to accept his identity, however, was ultimately responsible for Brooke's "facades" which seem to me not the less-than-poses Caesar addresses but "voices" Brooke adopts to address not only whatever audience he is addressing but himself as well. The poetry thus serves a dual, or double-voiced, purpose. Brooke has taken his poems and given them to the world while still managing to hold them close, leaving in them a record of his emotional history. At times this works in tandem with his address to the audience, and serves perhaps as a commentary on love and society.

In poems such as "Lust," this double-voicing is more successful by its discordance: "My throat was dry and my eyes hot to see. / Your mouth so lying was most heaven in view, / And your remembered smell most agony" (PW 127). Its inharmonious lines are unexpected from the poet of "Grantchester": "Oh! there the chestnuts, summer through, / Beside the river make for you / A tunnel of green gloom, and sleep / Deeply above" (PW 67).

Many critics find Brooke's poems unsuccessful, or forgettable, for what might be termed a lack of distance. I do not want to suggest that Brooke's lack of distance flaws much more than his early work, though some critics believe it intrudes in the majority of his poems. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent" T. S. Eliot distinguished a lack of

distance between the author and the speaker of the poem as the difference between sincere and significant emotion:

...very few know when there is an expression of significant emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet. The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach his impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. (471)

For Eliot, personality must be divorced from poetry, to a certain extent. Laskowski's otherwise balanced appraisal of Brooke flounders on this point of personality and distance:

Brooke never learned this; his poems, for instance, on his voyage to the South Seas show him prodding the injured areas of his psyche to see if they still hurt...Brooke's lack of control of tone in 'Grantchester' denies the poem any sense of distance from its speaker, the sense that is so highly prized in Eliot's works. (134)

Peter Firchow, among others, rightly disagrees, declaring that Brooke can be sentimental but "is actually very much an ironic unsentimentalist who writes in 'many voices'...Like the poetic impersonality which Eliot celebrates as a poetic ideal in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Brooke's poetic unsentimentality is (and must be) based on a powerful prior sentimentality..." (178).

While studying in Germany, Brooke wrote of Expressionism,

It recognizes what is roughly, the main reason of this modern art--a very sensible one--namely, that the chief object of a good picture is to convey the expression of an emotion of the artist, and not, as most people have been supposing, his impression of something he sees. (Prose 184)

Brooke's theory of the emergence of modern art seems to also control his own work. "Heaven" (1913) is an excellent example of this theory at work, as the poem is written from the

fishes' viewpoint, not Brooke's: "Fish say, they have their Stream and Pond; / But is there anything Beyond? / This life cannot be All, they swear, / For how unpleasant, if it were!" (PW 35). This begins the fishes' questioning of the afterlife, "We darkly know, by Faith we cry, / The future is not Wholly Dry...But somewhere, beyond Space and Time, / is wetter water, slimier slime!" Brooke's personal views and his poetry, on the whole is, at best, critical of Christianity. "Heaven" concludes with a positive view of the fishes' afterlife; "Fat caterpillars drift around, / And Paradisal grubs are found; / Unfading moths, immortal flies, / And the worm that never dies" (PW 36). Other poems, such as "Song of the Children in Heaven" and "Failure" to name two of many, depict Heaven as unkind or deserted. "Heaven", then, clearly achieves the "impersonality" of art that Eliot championed.

Caesar does a fine job of opening up for discussion Brooke's emotional life and the effect it had on his poetry, but he lends it too much importance and downplays the poetry and Brooke's poetic craftsmanship. Brooke was well versed not only in the Elizabethans and their use of the sonnet, but in contemporary poetry as well. Robert Graves wrote of Brooke, "we all look up to [him] as our elder brother and have immense admiration for his work from any standpoint, especially his technique, on which we all build. I know it is fashionable to dislike him: but no one does really..." (qtd. in Seymour-

Smith 106). Examining Brooke's emotional history should enrich the poetry, not dominate an analysis of it.

One of the main questions the reader and critic could ask about Brooke after reading the biographies is why make such personal poetry public? Did Brooke not consider his poetry personal? Critics do not fault "Heaven" for being false or overly imbued with Brooke's personal life because the subject matter seems so far removed from his personal affairs. Brooke once asserted to Edward Marsh that "Dead Men's Love" meant "Hell just consists in such absence of bodies" (Letters 361). It might well have meant this for Brooke--who once insisted that chastity was driving him mad. Yet Laskowski says "but everything in the poem implies the converse: Hell is being doomed to rely on transient, tainted flesh to satisfy the needs of love"--an agreement an unchaste Brooke affirmed (41).

In Brooke's poetry there seem too many directions for the reader to go, and in many instances Brooke's guidance has been thwarted. Critics have cited "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester" as a case in point. Marsh had Brooke change the title, removing Brooke's first choice, "The Sentimental Exile," which gave a decidedly ironic tone to a poem that describes the speaker pining for England in opening lines that are meant to be overtly sentimental--and then contradicting them soundly when the speaker describes himself as "sweating, sick, and hot." Brooke characterizes the inhabitants of Grantchester in

sickeningly glowing terms: "The men observe the Rules of Thought./ They love the Good; they worship Truth" (PW 71). The capitalizations are an outmoded nineteenth-century convention, and intrusive here, after Brooke has already sung the praises of Grantchester's people. Clearly unable to seriously characterize people in this manner, Brooke humorously does away with them. Parenthetically, Brooke adds another ironic (perhaps overtly so) punctuation-driven cue, enclosing a line that editors wished him to excise for its unpleasantness: "(And when they get to feeling old,/ They up and shoot themselves, I'm told)...." The poem is certainly sentimental in sections, which are cleverly excised and anthologized, contributing to a lopsided view of the poet. These sections are successful due to their juxtaposition with Brooke's loathing to oversentimentalize, represented by his suicidal characters.

In some cases Brooke may have been trying too hard to be realistic, to stretch or violate the boundaries of what critics and readers believed poetry was supposed to "do." In letters to Marsh and others Brooke deplores the many misinterpretations of his first book of poems. To prevent misreadings, Brooke may have insisted on including the so-called "ugly" poems, thus forcing readers to see that he could represent what was not beautiful, and therefore be realistic. The reviewers, as the first chapter attests, were shocked, and

few saw promise or purpose in these. Caesar suggests, "[a]nything physical that was less than beautiful seems to have caused Brooke great discomfort" (30).

It may be in these "ugly" poems that Brooke's double-voiced quality is so direct that readers feel the need to misinterpret the poet as "sentimental." In reading Brooke, the reader should keep in mind his desire to address the mundane and ugly realities in life, to do something new in poetry. His poems can be understood not so much as an autobiography, but as a well-crafted ambiguity enhanced by his own uncertainties in his life, mirrored uncannily in his art. Firchow views some of Brooke's letters to Ka (not included in Keynes' compilation) as Lawrencean, "...an honest, direct sexuality rather than a lying, intellectualized love. And, as with Lawrence, Brooke seems continually torn between the deep voices within him and the superficial voices of his education" (182). "Lust," can be seen as

...both symptomatic and emblematic of that [Lawrencian] conflict, for it faces both ways and lends itself just as readily to a positive reading as to a negative one; that is, it can be interpreted either as a description of a fulfilled sexual act, or as a description of a deliberately frustrated one, in which the prospect of actually realizing the speaker's obsession produces his impotence. The ambiguity is appropriate, for it testifies to the fact that Brooke... never was able to overcome the conflict within himself....
(182 Firchow)

Others would witness Firchow's discussion of ambiguity as Brooke's inability to discover a truly effective poetic voice. Firchow does not credit such a view, stating instead that

Brooke's "many voices" spoke "...often ironically, certainly unsentimentally, of loves both private and public, and expressed his thoughts as ironically critical of home as they did of abroad" (184).

The focus in Brooke's poetry may have been on love and relationships which his juvenilia casts in the mold of the decadent poets, but increasingly it seems that Brooke was using his inner struggles as a template for setting forth a new creed of "realism" like that exhibited in "Lust." Caesar notes the influence of the Elizabethan and Renaissance poets and dramatists Brooke studied as he began working "...towards a plainer, more conversational mode, which nevertheless retained some poetic diction and always relied upon strict metrical and rhyming patterns" (28). Brooke once wrote to Marsh of this deliberation, "I was trying consciously to write on a much looser & more...Anglo-Saxon basis..." (Letters 328). Firchow notes the Lawrencian tones in Brooke's letters that strove to make themselves plain in his poetry but succeeded in only a few places.

Curiously, Caesar does not comment on Brooke's poem "Lust," a title Brooke vehemently fought for and lost. He wrote to his publisher, Frank Sidgwick,

Is the objection to 'Lust' only that it's bad as poetry or also that it's shocking as morals?...If it's thought improper, it must be sadly misunderstood. Its meaning is quite 'proper' and so moral as to be almost untrue. If the title's too startling 'Libido'...could be substituted: though I'm afraid that would only make it more obscure. My

own feeling is that to remove it would be to overbalance the book still more in the direction of unimportant prettiness...It seemed to have qualities of reality & novelty that made up for the clumsiness...But the idea seemed to me important and moving. (6)

Brooke was not so adamant about the title changes of other poems such as "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester."

The 1970 Faber edition of Brooke's poetry places the poems in descending chronological order, beginning with his war pieces and ending with his juvenilia. The placement of "Lust" suggests that it was written before October 1909, the month in which Brooke made the "jump from virginity to Knowledge" with Denham Russell-Smith (qtd. in Delany 80). If Caesar's aim is to accord Brooke's poems more authenticity--as opposed to the insincerity of what critics call his "poses"--then this is one of his central authentic poems. In 1909 Brooke met Noel Olivier, but they did not seem to have a close relationship until early November judging from Song of Love. Brooke, it seems, would have had more cause to have taken the subject matter for "Lust" from his affair with Denham. "Lust" very nearly mirrors the sentiments in Brooke's letter (1912) to James Stratchey concerning this incident.

Brooke wrote to Stratchey "I was never in the slightest degree in love with him...I decided, almost quite consciously, I would put the thing through next night...to do away with the shame of being a virgin" (Delany 78). "Lust" opens, "The enormous wheels of will / Drove me...As never fool for

love...the mad victory I planned / Flashed real" (PW 127).

Brooke wrote of the encounter as "an adventure" but he reports being "horribly detached...I thought of him entirely in the third person..." (Delany 79). After he and Denham parted company Brooke reflected,

I thought of innumerable things, that this was all; that the boasted jump from virginity to Knowledge seemed a very tiny affair...My thoughts went backward and forward. I unexcitedly reviewed my whole life, and indeed the whole universe. I was tired, and rather pleased with myself, and a little bleak. (Delany 80)

"Lust" captures Brooke's emotions, "My conqueror's blood was cool as a deep river / In shadow; and my heart beneath your hand / Quieter than a dead man on a bed" (PW 127).

The last lines suggest that the speaker has found peace. The waters which he seeks to drown in through much of his poetry are here figured as his cooled blood in peaceful repose like that of a deep but shadowy river. His heart has broken through deadness. The heart is not as quiet as a dead man but is quieter, suggesting a deeper peace than death. Peace here is knowledge, understanding attained, making the title ironic, grasping for something out of reach. "Lust" can be taken as a statement on homosexuality, that it brings peace and "Knowledge." Readers might well have disagreed and called his vision not love but "lust", rendering the title much more ironic than the wan "Libido."

In his letter to Stratchey, Brooke had written, "The smell of sweat began to be noticeable." (Delany 79). Marsh objected

to the line "And your remembered smell most agony" in the poetry, citing "there are some things too disgusting to write about, especially in one's own language" (Hassall 294). Brooke disagreed, insisting that the line spoke realistically and its importance lay in speaking this reality. Brooke insisted on reality, and kept insisting. In every copy of Poems 1911 that he gave away, he penciled out "Libido" and wrote "Lust" above it.

To ignore the sentiment in "Lust" as real, and favor instead a latent decadent pose, seems difficult to do given the hints that a full-fledged, honest sentiment was forthcoming.

"Paralysis" (July 1909) sets off stark lines between characteristic "O!"s, emptiness and loneliness. "Fast in my linen prison I press / On impassable bars" recounts the speaker between reminiscences of his would-be lover who is unobtainable, "O ever moving, O lithe and free!" It is characteristic of Brooke to set off the kernel of truth with the clear facade of empty phrases that complete the rhyme and chime agreeably to the ear, or as Firchow addresses this characteristic, "the juxtaposition of wispy illusion with gross reality" ("The Death" 128). The poem ends with the speaker still pining: "And still in the white neat bed I strive / Most impotently against the gyve" (PW 122).

Brooke viewed Christianity through his mother's conceptions and attitudes, among them the disapproval of homosexuality.

Brooke's relationship with Christianity was one of denial or rejection judging by many of his poems such as the chilling "Song of the Children in Heaven" (1906):

In evil places far away
And naughty times for ever gone
We were so good, the Angels say,
That now God lets us sit upon
The golden floor of glassy stone.

He is so good and kind, and yet
(Don't tell Him) the great floor of glass
Is rather hard.

And when a baby laughs up here
Or rolls his crown about in play,
There is a pause. God looks severe;
The Angels frown, and sigh and pray,
And some-one takes the crown away.
(PW 156)

His anti-religious sentiment is expressed, too, in "the organized chance of living again." The War Sonnets, though, can be taken as a full-scale retreat into "safe" religious sentiment--one of the characteristics Bakshi takes as a hallmark of homosexual writers--or perhaps even the most cynical entreaty to God.

Indeed, Brooke's railings against conventional religion take many forms--even so far as to glory in a bishop's hypocrisy/rebellion at wearing puce gloves and God's inability to remove this image from Brooke's mind:

In Freiburg Station

In Freiburg station, waiting for a train
I saw a Bishop in puce gloves go by.
Now God may thunder furious from the sky,
Shattering all my glory into pain,
And joy turn stinking rotten, hope be vain,

Night fall on little laughters, little loves,
 And better Bishops don more glorious gloves,
 While I go down in darkness; what care I?

There is one memory God can never break,
 There is one splendour more than all the pain,
 There is one secret that shall never die,
 Star-crowned I stand and sing, for that hour's sake.
 In Freiburg station, waiting for a train,
 I saw a Bishop in puce gloves go by.

1912
 (PW 74)

The poem seems like inarticulate ravings. Why is the speaker glorying in this "secret that shall never die" and a memory or splendour "more than all the pain"? The poet believes he holds something valuable that even God cannot take from him--whether that be one clear vision that never escapes him--the bishop in puce gloves--or some knowledge that is his alone.

"The True Beatitude" (1913) speaks to a sentiment much like that contained in "In Freiburg Station." The speaker believes that with armageddon, "All the Good Mimes will have eternity / To praise their Author" (PW 60). The speaker and his lover are outside of this "harmonium buzzing Eternity of the Christians"--to quote Brooke's utopian view of The SCHEME:

Ah, Love! still temporal, and still atmospheric
 Teleologically unperturbed,
 We share a peace by no divine divined,
 An earthly garden hidden from any cleric,
 Untrodden of God, by no Eternal curbed.
 ("The True Beatitude")

"[B]y no divine divined" is something of an aural pun that contributes to the speaker's arch tone.

In January of 1910, Brooke penned a simple lyric in three parts entitled "The One Before the Last." At this time Brooke had been briefly enamored of Bryn Olivier before falling in love with her younger sister Noel. Prior to this Brooke's love life had consisted of school boy crushes on young men. The poem speaks of the "innocent young past" of 1905. The speaker makes use of the trappings of decadence that were germane to his school boy romances, especially recalling the "purple" scandal over his picture:

Sickly I pondered how the lover
 Wrongs the unanswering tomb,
 And sentimentalizes over
 What earned a better doom.

Gently he tombs the poor dim last time,
 Strews pinkish dust above,
 And sighs, 'The dear dead boyish pastime!
 But this--ah, God!--is Love!'
 (PW 106)

"The dear dead boyish pastime" is just that--chaste "crushes" on one's classmates. Despite the fact that they belong almost to "childhood," as the speaker characterizes these love affairs, the reader should keep in mind that Brooke was eighteen in 1905. Even should these be no more than "purple" affairs, the speaker sees no need to downplay their importance in favor of a new love:

--Better oblivion hide dead true loves,
 Better the night enfold,
 Than men, to eke the praise of new loves,
 Should lie about the old!
 (PW 107)

Indeed, in much of his poetry Brooke makes plain the lie of heterosexual love. His relationship poems are a poetry of denial. Given the "tomb" with its pinkish dust strewn above it, one can hardly miss the accusatory, arch tone that slams down with its damning statement "Better oblivion hide dead true loves...Than men, to eke the praise of new loves, Should lie about the old!" It seems that Brooke was brutally honest in his later poetry, showing most love affairs to be spiritual deaths, and shockingly honest in "Lust" in speaking--if the poem was indeed addressing Brooke's encounter with Denham--the love that dare not speak its name.

It is only in the reader to see that Brooke won or lost his battle with God, the Ranee, and himself. If Brooke "won" then "Peace" may be ironic, which the bulk of his work certainly is. "Peace" is a litany that seems to berate the "half-men" (which Brooke, by his own account, was among) and "their dirty songs and dreary" (which some reviewers thought his poetry was) and at once defeats and gives absolution to "all the little emptiness of love." "All things are written in the mind" Brooke wrote in a fragment tentatively titled "Lines for an Ode-Threnody on England" (PW 203-204). It is impossible now to get inside Brooke's mind. We do know that he frequently said and wrote that "men should be men and women, women" ("...if feminists are 'women' trying to be men, I suppose 'men' trying to be women are hominists..." Letters 592), but

what precisely does this mean? It meant that he hated feminism. He also professed a hatred for homosexuals, a difficult belief to sustain given his past actions and the fact that many of his friends were homosexual. This slur seemed to comfort him as it was also meant as his punishment, but to see "Peace" merely as part of this punishment and a death wish, an escape from possible transgressions, does not give Brooke enough poetic credit. Why read the War Sonnets at face value, a celebration that becomes a jihad? Brooke may have meant his "swimmers into cleanness leaping" to be going to their last reward, but Brooke railed against God, was not a devout believer, and as Hassall tells it, he was a poor diver as well. Brooke belly-flopped time and again into Byron's Pool near Grantchester, and he reveled in it, knowing that he could not dive. Whether Brooke's speaker belly-flopped or dove is now for the reader to decide.

IV. "...IT'S SO CHEERING TO FIND SOMEONE
WHO LIKES THE MODERN STUFF..."

Brooke was self-consciously moving his poetry in a new direction, even with the publication of Poems, 1911. He was heartened to hear that Edward Marsh appreciated this volume as "modern." His most overt attempt at becoming "modern"--that is, the type of poem receiving the most critical attention--was through his "ugly" poems, as critics labeled "Lust," "Wagner" "A Channel Passage," "Dawn," and "Dead Men's Love." ("Menelaus and Helen" is sometimes added to this list.) Critics single out these poems because they appear to be quite a departure from his best known anthology pieces such as "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester." Critics also view them as clumsy attempts at realistic portrayals of subject matter and a deliberate, even amateur, effort meant merely to shock the reader. Brooke felt compelled to defend the principle behind these poems:

I'm (of course) unrepentant about the 'unpleasant' poems...the point of it ["A Channel Passage"] was (or should have been!) 'serious'. There are common & sordid things--situations or details--that may suddenly bring all tragedy, or at least the brutality of actual emotions, to you. I rather grasp relievedly at them, after I've beaten vain hands in the rosy mists of poets' experience...The 'smell' business [in "Lust"] I don't really understand. Four hundred poems are written every year which end 'The wondrous fragrance of your hair': & nobody objects. People do smell other people, as well as see & feel & hear them. I do, & I'm not disgusted to think so. It's part of amazing emotions...
(Letters 328)

The idea of breaking free from "poetic" subject matter was the impetus behind the "ugly" poems, but as Hynes is quick to point out,

...his 'ugly poems' are a demonstration of the fact that you can't be modern simply by knowing what is modern. The five poems are very traditionally imagined (three in sonnets), and none shows the slightest affinity with the work that was being done by his most advanced contemporaries.... (148)

Hynes is right: Knowing what is modern does not make one a modernist.

Modernism is comprised of various characteristics that may manifest themselves uniquely in the works of diverse authors; some favored the use of fragmentation, others the motif of alienation rendered more conventionally. A concise, working definition of Modernism is construed as

writing marked by a strong and conscious break with tradition....Modern implies a historical discontinuity, a sense of alienation, loss, and despair. It rejects not only history but also the society of whose fabrication history is a record. It rejects traditional values and assumptions, and it rejects equally the rhetoric by which they were sanctioned and communicated. It elevates the individual and the inward over the social and the outward, and it prefers the unconscious to the self-conscious. (Holman and Harmon 298)

Critics generally, and at times almost casually, refer to Brooke as a reference point for works that are on the cusp of the Modernist age but reflect older poetic traditions. Brooke's search for identity led him to a love poetry of denial that helped contribute to an ironic tone, a rejection of past poetic traditions--especially in terms of subject matter--and a sense of alienation and isolation that makes its

way into seemingly the most Edwardian of poems, "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester." On closer examination, Brooke is a nascent modernist.

"Dawn" (1907) is one of Brooke's most striking and successful "ugly" poems. Though "traditionally imagined" in sonnet form and making use of a thrice repeated refrain, "Opposite me two Germans snore and sweat" (the last two read "sweat and snore"), this poem is especially authentic--that is, its "realism" could hardly be meant to shock the reader. The subject matter, more than the form, is of note here. The title is striking and incongruent in contrast to the body:

...any conventional expectations aroused by the title of the poem 'Dawn' are entirely refuted, for the poet uses the sonnet form to describe the boredom and restlessness of a railway journey by night. The poetic vision of sunrise observed 'From the train between Bologna and Milan, second class' is largely obscured by the poet's travelling companions...the romance of foreign travel is qualified by discomforts which intrude and disturb. That the sonnet should be used in what might be termed an anti-lyrical manner (what Hynes describes as 'aggressively anti-Apollonian'), that is to say upon an occasion which is entirely parochial, is a new development in the form's history. (Millard 168)

The repetition of "two hours" gives the illusion both of time lengthening and the sound of the train wheels: "We have been here for ever: even yet / A dim watch tells two hours, two aeons, more...There are two hours more; / Two hours to dawn and Milan; two hours yet" (PW 162). Rhyme and meter in this poem function significantly in terms of conveying a sense of locomotion and weary journeying. Even in this early poem J.

M. Gregson notes, "In 'Dawn' he shows he can treat other themes than escapist ones and show the sharp observation and selection of detail which are to be the war poet's stock-in-trade" (15). This poem breaks away from Georgian fare:

There is evidence here of a willingness to turn his mastery of sound-effects to more varied purpose, to make it the poet's servant rather than his master; to vary the characteristic verse and rhyme schemes of the Georgians for different effects in themes demanding greater realism; to use more varied and irregular rhythms with conscious control for particular poetic purposes. (Gregson 16)

By contrast, Brooke's "A Channel Passage" (1909) may be construed as an example of an unsuccessful ugly poem. This poem has been called an academic exercise that "might revolt the reader, if its strict attention to physical detail was not so patently designed to achieve precisely that end" (McCourt 153). Laskowski reminds the reader that even though poems such as this take Brooke's unhappy love affairs, or "internal psychic pressures," as their source, "one must not forget that it was a public stance, carefully chosen in its infrequency for maximum shock value" (41).

Millard disagrees: "Brooke's characteristic depiction of physical frailty becomes comic..." Even so, his

...use of alliterative and assonantal techniques to portray nauseous vomiting suggests a subversion of poetic tradition which is more than just cleverness, especially when viewed in the context of Brooke's increasing antipathy to romantic idealistic aspirations. (Millard 168)

Affected lines--"up I throw"--contribute to an anti-romanticism. Laskowski notes, "Many critics have pointed out

that the poem is in itself weak, yet one assumes Brooke realized the undercutting effect that the inverted word order of 'up I throw' would have" (38).

"A Channel Passage" displays the distance between the conversational tone and the inflated rhetoric of sonnet-speak. If this is truly love, not as it is idealized, but as it is experienced, then the sonnet form is well chosen to display the speaker's viewpoint--that love affects him physically, contributing further to his sea-sickness. The lines in this sonnet are a strange admixture suggesting that the poet's words mimic the speaker's actions, a violent retching accompanied by four exclamation marks, punctuation that would help an Elizabethan sonneteer sing the praises of his love.

Brooke's identity crisis had a great influence on his poetry that shows itself in many forms, among them his reluctance to leave the sonnet but the desire to make it serve his purposes nonetheless. His work and his identity were composed of curious contradictions that make him, finally, not an unrealized (or failed) nascent modernist, but a subversive one. Brooke purports to be conventional only on the surface of his poetry. His use of the sonnet is one of the most obvious choices for placing him as pre-Modern. Modernist compositions were self-referential, relying neither on the forms nor the rhetoric of the past. One of the characteristic aspects of Brooke, though, is the tension he creates in his poetry by

stretching the boundaries of classical forms, essentially creating a commentary on how the forms do not work and are now inadequate in conveying their message. No longer are the old forms capable of functioning with the purposes they once had. The sonnet is, for Brooke, the greatest liar of all poetic forms. Kenneth Millard writes in Edwardian Poetry, "Brooke persists with the sonnet form because it enables him to make attacks on both love and art at the same time" (170). In a poetry of denial--that is, a denial of both love and Christianity, and sometimes the self--the sonnet is used effectively to make Brooke's most astute commentary on relationships.

"Sonnet Reversed" (1911) is one of Brooke's most self-conscious attempts at playing with the conventions. Brooke turns not only the concept of love upside down, as if to shake the change loose from its pockets and reveal its small worth, but the poetic form as well.

Hand trembling towards hand; the amazing lights
Of heart and eye. They stood on supreme heights.

Ah, the delirious weeks of honeymoon!

Soon they returned, and, after strange adventures,
Settled at Balham by the end of June.

Their money was in Can. Pacs. B. Debentures,
And in Antofagastas. Still he went

Cityward daily; still did she abide
At home. And both were really quite content

With work and social pleasures. Then they died.
They left three children (besides George, who drank):

The eldest Jane, who married Mr. Bell,
William, the head-clerk in the County Bank,

And Henry, a stock-broker, doing well.

(PW 89)

Sonnets are not typically reserved for figures "quite content" in their lives. While rhyme and meter are preserved, this is not the rhetoric of classical poetic traditions. This sonnet is, in Kenneth Millard's words, a "creative subversion of poetic tradition which also disturbs traditionally romantic conceptions of love and marriage" (170). He reports that "...Brooke is the only poet to use the inverted form as an essential element in meaning of the poem..." (169). By setting off the couplet of the first two lines, Brooke sets up a frame that operates only at the opening of the sonnet at which point he seems to be introducing a high romance poised on "amazing heights." His subject matter is so far from this ideal that the frame has become obsolete by the sonnet's end.

T. S. Eliot frequently makes a cameo appearance in appraisals of Brooke's work. Eliot's poetry, especially "The Waste Land" is representative of the creed of Modernism while Brooke's work is taken as a representative of affected, outdated pre-World War I verse. Laskowski presents a discussion of Eliot and Brooke, citing their similar backgrounds and poetic tastes and contrasting their focus and quality of verse. Brooke, Laskowski decides, confined experimentation to his "ugly" poems alone. In addition, Laskowski cites Brooke's inability to escape his personality in his art as anti-Modern (129-136).

It is, though, crucial to keep in mind that Brooke was using his own experiences as a template for commentary on society's attitudes toward love and relationships, as chapter three attests. Modernists, too, often used the self as a point of reference. Brooke's divided views on himself contribute to a sense of alienation and loss, themes prevalent in Modernist writings. Brooke is still coping with the fragments of a generation around him--often using poetic trappings to demonstrate ineffectuality. Amid his corpses, ghosts, and lovers damned, he is coming to a new vision.

B. C. Southam first discussed the connection between "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester" (1912) and "The Waste Land" (1921), writing only that Eliot may have had Brooke in mind in the opening lines:

When the openings to 'The Waste Land' and 'Grantchester' are compared it can be seen that there are considerable likenesses in detail and design; and it is likely that Eliot would be expecting the reader to catch the essential dissimilarity between their two views of life, as glimpsed through their accounts of Spring memories and awakenings.
(72)

The opening lines do share an affinity in subject matter. Eliot and Brooke both begin with the lilac: "April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire" and Brooke, "Just now the lilac is in bloom, / All before my little room" (1278, 67). Brooke gives the poem's location, following the title, as the Cafe des Westens while Eliot's speaker "went on in sunlight, into

the Hofgarten, / And drank coffee, and talked for an hour"
 (1278). Both openings are interspersed with fragments of
 German. The contrast is striking in these opening lines, but
 the poems bear a strange resemblance in concerns throughout.
 Each poet is concerned with time and recollection, a coupling
 that attempts to access modern life.

Both poems break with the past, though of course Eliot's
 form accomplishes this break in a more overt manner with its
 fragmentation and daunting documentation, as though the poem
 creates a history unto itself. Brooke sees no need to footnote
 what every classically trained scholar should know, but offers
 the admission that knowledge of nymphs and other trappings of
 the classical world are receding rapidly into a lost past. Of
 the naiad and satyr the speaker in "The Old Vicarage" clearly
 states, "these are things I do not know." Eliot's world is
 hollow, built on fragments, heralding a world that has
 forgotten its past. Both poems do, however, incorporate
 allusions to the lost classical world while each speaker
 figures himself outside of this past. In "The Fire Sermon,"
 Eliot writes,

The nymphs are
 departed,
 And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;
 Departed, have left no addresses.
 By the waters of Lemman I sat down and wept...

Brooke's nymphs have gone as well,

And clever modern men have seen
 A Faun a-peeping through the green,

And felt the Classics were not dead,
 To glimpse a Naiad's reedy head,
 Or hear the Goat-foot piping low: ...
 But these are things I do not know.

Eliot's speaker weeps beside his river while Brooke's speaker finds a Lethean life agreeable as he lies "flower-lulled in sleepy grass...Until the centuries blend and blur" beside the river at Grantchester (PW 68).

"The Old Vicarage" is not the "mere 'Camp'" it appears to be. In many ways, the poem is elegiac, the requiem for a utopia, a place and time that could never be. Brooke finally exhausts the poem with a series of questions that amount to a plea. Brooke's emotions were still seeking a balm after the Lulworth incident. It was imperative that Brooke be in his own emotional wasteland to write this poem rich in longing. Delany reads the last questioning lines as "...a strangled plea that the river and meadows might swallow his--and Ka's--sexual guilt" (184). Brooke, too, might have said with Eliot, "These fragments I have shored against my ruins"--a line suggesting an act of self-preservation or rescue (1291).

Modernist Berlin provides the necessary contrast for generating "The Old Vicarage," a

...classic example of fetishizing the English past...it was never plausible that Rupert, or any other disillusioned young Englishman, might recover his innocence by returning to the great good place where the clock had stopped. In fact, he had become too restless to be able to live at Grantchester for any length of time again. It was lost to him, honey and all, long before the Great War put it out of everyone's reach, embalmed in the last Edwardian summers. (Delany 184)

Millard insists too, on the "obviously utopian" last lines that are "...a distortion of the memory which encourages all manner of romantic delusions" (174). Paul Fussell notes the delusional aspects of the "[g]olden half-light" of dawn and sunset that continue to diffuse through this Edwardian reminiscence. "Grantchester" is a "...poem whose 140 lines manage to encompass four separate dawns and three sunsets" (60). Brooke rejects this half-lit world, glowing golden even down to the last line with its too-sweet honey.

"The Waste Land," too, is suffused with an unreal, ethereal light. Eliot speaks of a "violet light" and a "violet hour." Time stills the light at this strange point that is always sunset or sunrise. Brooke's church clock frozen at ten to three competes with the four dawns and three sunsets to make sense of time. Part two of "The Waste Land," "A Game of Chess," highlights the urgency of time by repeating five times the closing-time invocation of British bartenders, "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME."

Brooke's poem is, like Eliot's "The Waste Land," not without its discordant notes. Even if he renders the people of Grantchester in a humorous light, they remain suicidal. His attitudes toward conventional Christianity are also evident in the "Satanic cries" of the "prim ecclesiastic rout" that form a "spectral dance, before the dawn, / A hundred Vicars down the lawn; / Curates, long dust," that "come and go / On

lissom, clerical, printless toe" (PW 69). Again, Brooke was urged by his publisher to leave out the discordant notes, this time the "Satanic cries" and the villagers' suicides.

Eliot's references to Christianity act to fragment or disavow this tradition, in part by borrowing lines from ceremonies and using them in combination with borrowings from texts and prayers sacred to other belief systems. In "What the Thunder Said" Eliot seems to stand Christianity on its head; "upside down in air were towers / Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours / And voices singing out of the empty cisterns and exhausted wells" (1289). The wells gone dry are spiritual impoverishment, as Southam attests: "in the language of the Old Testament the empty wells and cisterns would signify the drying up of faith and the worship of false gods...Jeremiah ii, 13" (89-90). Just as Brooke's Grantchester was once a vicarage, Eliot's church bells are "reminiscent" of, but are no longer, used as trappings of a living Christianity.

Millard asserts that, "The importance of 'Grantchester' in Brooke's work is that its comic exaggeration shows the poet both celebrating and satirizing the traditional first-person speaker" (174). He writes of the speaker,

Brooke's persona draws attention to the contradictions of exile while the energy and humour of the poem invite the reader to excuse them. The note of self-parody is strongly felt at 'God! I will pack, and take a train,/And get me to England once again', which prompts the finest comic section of the poem. Here, the speaker's foreign travel does not

broaden the mind but commits him to a perspective which becomes progressively narrow, until it ends in a comic *reductio ad absurdum*. (174)

Brooke believed the poem had "pleasant silly passages" which Patrick Bridgwater describes as "...typical of him in the way in which he mocks his own sentimentality" (307). Indeed, "The speaker of Brooke's poem makes no attempt to disguise his inconsistency in feeling a strong sense of English pride while berating the people of all but a tiny hamlet" (Millard 173).

If Brooke believed that this poem had "pleasant silly passages," Eliot gave a louder voice to his disturbances. Part three of "The Waste Land," "The Fire Sermon," footnotes Edmund Spencer and the Psalms, but Brooke is invoked as well in the lines,

Sweet Thames, run softly as I end my song,
Sweet Thames, run softly for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.
(1283)

As he comes to the end of his poem, Brooke's speaker asks, "And laughs the immortal river still / Under the mill, under the mill?" (PW 71) The repetition of the running river here incorporates the laughter that has so long been read as benevolent, but the speaker's questioning may be reaching a frenzied pitch either to hold onto this impossible world or escape it.

If the end of "The Old Vicarage" is a strangled plea to cover or absolve Brooke's sexual guilt, as Delany believes it

to be, Eliot's second section of "The Waste Land" engages in a more direct questioning; "Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak. / What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? / I never know what you are thinking. Think." (1281-1282). This section of the poem, "A Game of Chess," addresses both the tale from antiquity of the rape of Philomel and her subsequent transformation to a nightingale, and Lil who has poor health due to her child-bearing. Sexuality is a destructive force in this section, as it was for Brooke in life and as he displays it in his poetry.

Brooke found alienation not in urban squalor as did the Modernists, but in the too-praised pastoral landscape of England. "The Old Vicarage" is a swan song for the Edwardian summer that had become too long even three years before the war. Brooke knew that he would not find in Grantchester "Deep meadows yet, for to forget / The lies, and truths, and pain?" as his questioning admits. "The Old Vicarage, Grantchester" is only haunted now by past notions. Christianity is dead not only in the title but in the spectral vicars. The poem is beautiful in its capturing of loss that the speaker has tempered for the reader with his self-deprecating humor. He knew the tide had not yet turned, and for many the Edwardian summer was not yet drawn to a close. He would have to bide his time, wait it out, knowing that the clock would someday move beyond "ten to three"....

V. EPILOGUE: PARLOR GAMES

Any objective analysis of Brooke's writing became impossible because of the polemics surrounding the politics of his reputation. The moment of Brooke's death also ensured that the literary parlor game of speculating on what Brooke would have developed into, both artistically and personally, would continue for as long as his writings were discussed.

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What might Rupert Brooke have become had he survived the war? As Laskowski has noted, this was the topic of the "literary parlor game" Brooke's death gave rise to. Virginia Woolf believed he may have become Prime Minister. Brooke wrote to Raverat that by the time of their meeting in 1933--the Organized Chance of Living Again--he would be a "mumbling literary hack." Edmund Blunden was convinced that "[e]xcept for the great national emergency, we may now suppose that Rupert Brooke would have maintained his course as a scholar and a man of letters, and figured not as a lively sub-lieutenant but a mellowed master of a college" (12). Geoffrey Matthews, writing, as does Blunden, during the mid-fifties, concluded, "The anxieties of Brooke's highly placed friends and patrons and well-wishers...would eventually have stifled him as a poet..." (33). Frank Field also mused, "...if he possessed the ruthlessness and determination essential for a career in high politics, it is doubtful whether he was endowed with the nervous and physical stamina necessary for political success" (121).

"What if" questions of this nature offer a chance for fascinating and fantastic suppositions but they do not move the critical evaluations of Brooke in useful directions. What Brooke critics need to do is invent a new game that moves them out of the parlor and into the biographies, the archives, and ultimately to a fresh vision. Critics and readers might begin by asking simply, 'Who was this poet that influenced writers as diverse as F. Scott Fitzgerald and H. P. Lovecraft?' With the help of biographical information, for example, gender studies of Brooke could contribute significantly to a fuller understanding of Brooke as a poet.

While he is a minor poet and likely will remain that way, Brooke has been slotted into categories--most notably as a "war poet"--for so long that new perspectives on his work may seem like radical re-readings; they are not. Reading Brooke in the form of a nascent modernist is seeing him anew and delving into an underappreciated side of his work. In the introduction to Seeing Double: Revisioning Edwardian and Modernist Literature, Carola Kaplan and Anne Simpson discuss the misconceptions about the Edwardians. Pre-World War I Britain was a time of technological and social change, not a weekend garden party as the "Edwardian summer" view seems to suggest. "Edwardians' [and Georgians'] patient realism and their adaptations of romance modes are acknowledged" despite the fact that these facets of their writing are often elided.

Kaplan and Simpson urge the reader to keep in mind that the chasms between Georgian and Modernist literature are somewhat artificial: "...to designate literary periods under constricting aesthetic rubrics and to define them by discrete thematic preoccupations, as if these pursuits lead to 'truths' about literary history" is inaccurate (vii). These designations are "...acts of appropriation...performed by successive generations of readers, with far-ranging and often unforeseen results" (vii). Reading Brooke as a nascent modernist is not so much "radical" as poetic justice.

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